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Alabama Commission on Higher Education

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Commissioners



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Highlights of Legislative Activity

FY 2003-2004 EDUCATION TRUST FUND

Act 2003-438, the Education Trust Fund (ETF) budget bill, was passed during the second Special Session and signed into law by Governor Bob Riley to fund the FY 2003-2004 appropriations for education related entities on September 29, 2003. This act along with other ETF budget allocations appropriated more than 4.2 billion in education spending related to these education entities. Many of the entities received cuts in their funding or only slight increases to cover the increases in fringe benefits rates. Some of the cuts were as much as seventy-five (75%) percent. The Legislature plans to cut the lines that received these three-fourth decreases in their budget entirely during the 2004 session which will begin in February. Other lines were cut ten percent or more.

FY 2003-2004 FUNDING FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher Education's share of the Education Trust Fund for FY 2003-2004 amounted to \$1,160,033,885 or 27.4 percent, K-12 received 68.4 percent of the ETF and allocations to other entities accounted for the remaining 4.2 percent.

Senior institutions received an overall increase of less than one percent while two-year institutions received a 1.8 percent increase. Actual dollar amounts of the increases for FY 2003-2004 are as follows: Senior institutions - \$6,843,363 and Two-Year Institutions - \$4,105,246.

Highlights of Academic Activity

NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAMS IN TWO-YEAR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

The following new academic programs were approved during fiscal year 2002-03:

Alabama A&M University	Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Reading
Jacksonville State University	Master of Science (MS) in Emergency Management
Troy State University Dothan	Bachelor of Science (BS) in Chemistry
University of Alabama at Birmingham	Doctor of Science in Physical Therapy (DScPT) in Physical Therapy
	Master of Arts (MA) in Communication Management
	Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) in Physical Therapy
University of South Alabama	Master of Science in Environmental Toxicology
	Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) in Physical Therapy
Bevill State Community College	Associate in Applied Science (AAS) in Paralegal/Legal Assistant
Bishop State Community College	Certificate (C) and Associate in Applied Science in Emergency Medical Services
Faulkner State Community College	Certificate (C) in Practical Nursing
	Associate in Applied Science (AAS) in Nursing
Lawson State Community College	Associate in Applied Science (AAS) in Child Development

STATE PLAN FOR HIGHER EDUCATION 2003-2004 To 2008-2009

In accord with its statute as the state agency responsible for statewide long-range planning for postsecondary education in Alabama, the Commission adopted the State Plan for Higher Education 2003-04 to 2008-09 on August 8, 2003.

Process: The plan was a result of a year-long, highly participatory and collaborative planning effort that included input from a broad section of representatives of the two-year and four-year public institutions as well as prominent representatives from the business and education communities of Alabama and the region. At the foundation of the planning process were the twenty-one (21) members of the Planning Liaison Group (PLG) that included a cross section of all public postsecondary institutions in the state appointed by their respective presidents. As part of the preliminary planning a number of speakers from the state and region were invited to address the membership and provide their perspectives on a variety of topics related to the needs of higher education in Alabama.

Purpose: The purpose of the State Plan for Alabama Higher Education is fourfold:

1. To focus public attention on important strategic issues facing Alabama higher education and the state;
2. To articulate Alabama's needs and its vision for higher education;
3. To commit resources necessary to provide high quality teaching, scholarship, research, and public service programs for Alabama citizens; and
4. To promote stronger working relationships among stakeholders with an interest in the establishment of common goals and the resolution of issues related to the improvement of higher education in Alabama.

Goals and Objectives: The Plan establishes statewide goals and objectives based on a shared vision with methods and guidelines for achieving them. They include: providing reasonable access using a variety of delivery systems, preparing for a competitive work force, focusing on accountability and high performance, acknowledging the economic benefit of higher education institutions to the state as well as the need for stewardship of public resources, and engaging in cooperative planning. More importantly, the Plan provides a framework for institutions to develop their own plans within the context of individual institutional missions and financial resources and measure the degree to which progress has been made towards the goals and objectives identified by the end of the five-year planning cycle.

Dissemination: The Plan has been disseminated throughout the state to all councils and advisory groups associated with the development of the Plan as well as the Governor and legislative leadership. Additional copies are available on the Commission's website at www.ache.state.al.us through the category labeled "Publications."

Implementation: Inasmuch as it was not the intent of the Plan to be prescriptive, with respect to either the method or timetable for implementation, institutions and their Boards of Trustees have the flexibility of integrating the goals and objectives into existing long-range planning cycles or embarking on new strategic initiatives. The Alabama College System (ACS) has elected to develop a model community college characterized by quality standards, performance indicators, and institutional accountability. Known as Project QPA (Quality, Performance, Accountability), the goal is to strengthen planning and evaluation within the ACS and to assist in communicating more effectively the accomplishment of community and technical colleges. The project is under the direction of Dr. Don Crump, former chair and member of the Articulation and General Studies Committee, a 19-member QPA Steering Committee responsible for providing general oversight, and eight (8) task forces. Project QPA is scheduled for completion in the Spring of 2004.

PROGRAM VIABILITY

Act 96-557 adopted by the Legislature in 1996 required the Alabama Commission on Higher Education to “enforce, monitor, and report on minimum degree productivity standards for all existing programs of instruction at public two-year and four-year institutions of higher education.”

According to the law, if a non-viable program does not meet the standard at the end of the three-year monitoring period, the institution will either submit a waiver request to the Commission or place the program on a maximum three-year phase out. If a waiver request is not approved by the Commission, the non-viable program will be phased out over a maximum three-year period.

When the initial assessment of program viability was made in 1998, a total of 655 (36%) of programs in universities and two-year colleges were non-viable. By 2001 when the non-viable programs had been monitored for the required three-year cycle, the number of non-viable programs had dropped to 228, due primarily to the implementation of strategies to improve the productivity of programs, curriculum revisions, program mergers and consolidations, and program terminations. This 65% reduction in non-viable programs in three years is attributable directly to institutional leadership and action.

What has happened to the remaining 228 non-viable programs? In the latter part of 2001, universities and two-year colleges submitted waiver requests for 85 of the programs, designated 49 remaining non-viable core liberal arts programs to be monitored for three additional years, and terminated 94 programs. During 2002, the staff reviewed 85 waiver requests (only 13% of the original 655 non-viable programs). During the review period, the institutions elected to delete nine additional programs. As a result, the staff developed final recommendations on 76 waiver requests. Preliminary recommendations on the waiver requests were distributed to the Commission and the institutions on November 22, 2002; a public hearing was held on the preliminary recommendations on January 17, 2003; and the Commission adopted the final recommendations on February 21, 2003.

EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM TO STIMULATE COMPETITIVE RESEARCH

What is EPSCoR: The Alabama EPSCoR is a consortium of academic, government, and industrial organizations (Federal-State-Industrial partnerships) that was created to establish an infrastructure within the state of Alabama capable of developing and sustaining high-quality science and engineering research and education that can in turn contribute to statewide national competitiveness. Ninety-seven (97) industry, government and federal lab partners are part of this partnership in addition to the EPSCoR academic institutions in Alabama which include the seven PhD-granting research universities: Alabama A&M University, Auburn University, The University of Alabama, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the University of Alabama in Huntsville, Tuskegee University, and the University of South Alabama. Additional academic institutions that have been a part of and benefited from EPSCoR funding include: Troy State University, Shelton State Community College, Alabama School of Math and Science, Oakwood College, Samford University, University of Montevallo, University of North Alabama, Stillman College, Jacksonville State University, Miles College, Alabama Southern Community College, Alabama State University, and Jefferson State Community College. New institutions funded in 2003 were Ayers State and Beville State Community Colleges. More than 148 faculty, staff, and an equal number of students participated in EPSCoR activities this year.

Program Funding: During FY2002 the total EPSCoR funding for Alabama was \$15.3 million (\$11.2 million in federal funds and \$4.1 million in matching funds). The Alabama EPSCoR is in its third year of a three-year \$14.9 million Research Infrastructure Improvement (RII) award from the National Science Foundation (NSF). These funds are supporting three multi-campus “Centers of Excellence”: Alabama Structural Biology Consortium (UAH, UAB, USA); Integrated Microelectromechanical Systems Photonics for Information Technology (UAH, AU, TU, USA); and Large-Scale Electromechanical Systems (UA, AU, SSCC, ASMS) in addition to continuing support for the Internet 2 Initiative (AAMU, AU, TU, UA, UAB, UAH, USA). The Internet 2 Initiative is designed to expand the statewide high-speed networking infrastructure and enhance research and education applications.

Program Goals:

- Increase federal funding. Total EPSCoR awards increased this past year from \$9.66 million to \$11.2 million. Competitive NSF co-funding awards during FY2003 were \$5.11 million. The return on investment is 5.5 to 1.
- Increase research competitiveness of all institutions in the state. In addition to the seven PhD granting institutions and twelve additional Alabama colleges and universities named above, plus the Alabama School of Math and Science that continue to benefit from the program, two new institutions were funded in 2003: Ayers State and Beville State Community College.
- Increase diversity. Participation rates for women increased from 18% to 26%; for Blacks from 3% to 8%; for Asian from 24% to 33%; and for Hispanic from 0% to 2%. Develop University-Industry-Government Partnerships. Industry and Federal Laboratory Partnerships increased last year from 73 to 97.

- Coordinate the six federal EPSCoR programs in Alabama. Six federal programs contributed \$11.2 million in funding. The NSF contributed over \$8 million (\$3 million/infrastructure award and NSF co-funding/\$5,111,771); Department of Defense contributed \$1,438,344; Department of Energy contributed \$748,259; National Aeronautics and Space Administration contributed \$244,973. Alabama is newly eligible for funding from the Department of Agriculture and continued funding under restructuring of a new program under the Environmental Protection Agency.

Additional information on the Alabama EPSCoR program is available at: <http://alepscor.ua.edu>.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
"NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND/TITLE II" COMPETITIVE GRANT

Program: The Alabama Commission on Higher Education administers competitive grants authorized under Title II of the U. S. Department of Education Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) Act. The intent of the "No Child Left Behind/Title II" program (PL 107-110) is to ensure that all teachers teaching in core academic subjects are highly qualified by the end of the 2005-2006 school year. Core academic subjects include: English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography.

Appropriation: Partnership grants involving Schools of Education, Schools of Arts and Sciences, and Local Education Agencies are awarded to post-secondary institutions on a competitive basis for professional development projects offered to teachers to improve their teaching proficiency, reinforce their subject area knowledge and provide them with materials necessary to meet project objectives. The appropriation to the Commission for FY 2002-03 was \$1,175,367.

Professional Development Impact: During the past year more than 1000 teachers representing 65 public school districts and 18 private schools participated directly in one or more of the eighteen (18) federally-funded projects (FY 2002-2003). Ninety-percent (90%) of the professional development activities exceeded 80 hours of instruction. More than seven hundred (700) of these teachers serve 49 public school districts identified by the Alabama State Department of Education as "high need." The Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) reading coaches who participated work with an additional 17,000 teachers in over 450 ARI schools.

In addition to the \$1,132,222 in federal funds that supported these projects in the areas of mathematics, science, foreign language, and the arts, additional support for the projects was provided by the host higher education institutions and other partners including the Honda Corporation and National Science Foundation. The estimated total additional funding leveraged from those sources exceeded \$666,000.

Grant Awards: ACHE Requests for Proposals were circulated in two categories, and a total of 18 awards were granted. Eight (8) projects were approved for funding under Category A and ten (10) grants were funded under Category B.

Category A Awards: "Improving Teacher Quality: The Alabama Reading Initiative Collaborative (Year Two)." Eligible applicants for this category were institutions of higher education with a state-approved Class A Reading Specialist program and/or charter members of the Collaborative (2001-2002). Contracts were awarded to: Alabama A&M University; Auburn University; Auburn University at Montgomery; Jacksonville State University; Troy State University; University of Alabama; University of Alabama at Birmingham; University of Montevallo; and University of South Alabama.

Category B Awards: “Improving Teacher Quality: Mastery of Content.” Contracts were granted to: Auburn University for “Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving-A Discrete Math Leadership Institute;” Birmingham Southern College for “Helping Teachers to Help Students in Mathematics;” Jacksonville State University for “Improving Physics and Chemistry Teaching in Secondary Education;” Samford University for “Extended Communities of Practice: Mastery of Science Education Through Leadership;” Troy State University/Dothan for “Wiregrass Math/Science Consortium;” University of Alabama at Birmingham for “Alabama Hands-On Activity Science Program (ALAHASP);” University of Alabama in Huntsville (two awards): “The Success Through Academic Research (STAR) Project: The Independent Study Scholarship Program,” and “Teaching the Future: Mastery of Science and Mathematics Through Space Exploration;” University of Montevallo/Alabama Humanities Foundation for “Grand Tour II: Global Pathways of Language;” and University of West Alabama/Alabama Institute for Education in the Arts for “Professional Development in Comprehensive Discipline Based Arts Education.”

For information on the projects funded as well as other documents related to the administration of this program, see the link to the No Child Left Behind/Title II Program on the Commission’s web site at <http://www.ache.state.al.us> .

ARTICULATION AND GENERAL STUDIES COMMITTEE

Enabling Legislation: The Articulation and General Studies Committee (AGSC) was established by Act 94-202 in March 1994. The primary goals of the legislation were: 1) to provide for a uniform articulation agreement among all institutions of higher education as well as a statewide general studies curriculum; 2) to provide for the computation of grade point averages of certain transferred students; 3) to specify that the Act would not impede the objectives of historically black institutions; 4) to provide for implementation conditioned on the participation of certain institutions; and 5) to specify certain reporting requirements.

Organization: To implement provisions specified in the Act, the legislation provided for the establishment of a ten-member Articulation and General Studies Committee (AGSC) that was charged with four objectives: 1) to develop a statewide general studies curriculum no later than September 1, 1998; 2) to develop and adopt an articulation agreement by September 1, 1999 for the transfer of credit among all public institutions of higher education in Alabama; 3) to examine the need for a uniform course numbering system, course titles, and course descriptions; and 4) to resolve problems in the administration or interpretation of the articulation agreement of the general studies curriculum. Dr. Linda Glaze, assistant provost for academic affairs at Auburn University served as the AGSC Chair during 2003. The executive director of the Commission serves as an ex-officio member of the Committee.

Accomplishments: In 2003, the main focus of the AGSC was to address the twelve recommendations listed in the “Alabama Articulation and General Studies Committee and Statewide Transfer/Articulation Reporting System Evaluation Project” that was completed in May 2002. This work is directly related to legislative charge #4 (listed above) “to resolve problems in the administration or interpretation of the articulation agreement of the general studies curriculum.”

The following recommendations were made in the final evaluation report [Note: The action taken by the AGSC/STARS is also included]:

1. Improvement of Area V pages should be a top priority of the AGSC and STARS. [Action Taken – The AGSC created a state subcommittee to review and address current problems and deficiencies associated with Area V Pages. A generic template for Area V pages was sent to each four-year institution to provide guidance as they redesign and improve their web pages. The AGSC and the STARS office will continue to work to improve all Area V Pages.]
2. The AGSC needs to establish an executive position to fulfill administrative responsibilities and serve as the designated contact person for the committee and STARS. [Action Taken – The AGSC created a new administrative position - executive director of AGSC/STARS. In August of 2003, the AGSC hired Mr. Keith Sessions to fill this position. He began work on September 1, 2003. Mr. Sessions served as the assistant director of the STARS Program from 1994-2000.]

3. Improved coordination and communication about curricular and degree program changes are needed among academic committees, universities, and STARS. [Action Taken – A number of steps are being taken to address this issue. This is the top priority of the new executive director for 2003-2004. The executive director and his staff are currently in the process of setting up annual workshops and training sessions throughout various regions of the state.]
4. The STARS website should be revised with primary emphasis given to use by students and advisors. [Action Taken - The STARS website has been totally redesigned. The new design has made it easier for students and advisors to obtain necessary transfer information. The site is available at <http://stars.troyst.edu>.]
5. Monthly reports to universities need refinement. [Action Taken – The STARS office has refined the various usage reports sent to universities across the state. The reports are now available in three different file formats to simplify how the data is used in recruitment efforts.]
6. Efforts to increase the visibility of STARS statewide are needed. [Action Taken – The STARS office is currently looking for new, innovative ways to increase program visibility across the state. New logos have been created. New brochures and pamphlets are in the works. An electronic newsletter will soon be sent out to advisors, faculty, administrators and students statewide. In addition, training and advertising materials will ultimately be sent out on electronic media (cd-rom, dvd, etc.)]
7. STARS should increase outreach services to ensure greater participation by all community colleges and state universities. [Action Taken – Much has been done and will be done to increase awareness and use of the STARS System both at the two-year and four-year levels. This outreach process is an ongoing process. One thing that the AGSC has done in this area is to create “AGSC Institutional Points of Contact” at each two-year and four-year institution. The primary role of these individuals is to be their campuses’ central source of information pertaining to the AGSC and STARS.]
8. Community colleges should systematically introduce STARS to students early in their first semester of enrollment. [Action Taken – The Department of Postsecondary Education has strongly encouraged their institutions to incorporate use of STARS into their advising and student orientation procedures.]
9. Careful review of the alignment of associate degree requirements with those for the baccalaureate degree should be completed. [Action Taken – This issue will be addressed over the next few years.]

10. The AGSC should not pursue a statewide uniform course numbering and title system. [The AGSC agrees with this recommendation; therefore, no action has been taken in this area.]
11. The relationship between the AGSC and STARS needs clarification. [Action Taken - A new organizational chart for the AGSC and STARS has been developed and approved to clarify the relationship between the two.]
12. The AGSC needs to conduct a carefully designed study to evaluate the success of community college students who transfer to state universities. [Action Taken – The AGSC plans to initiate a study in this area within the next two-five years assuming necessary funds are provided to finance such a study.]

For information on the AGSC including the legislation, minutes of AGSC meetings, committee structure and membership, course approval with submission deadlines, ratified templates, evaluation project, and policies, see the STARS web site at <http://stars.troyst.edu> .

Non-Resident Institutional Review

Regulatory Authority: The Commission is responsible for the programmatic review of post-secondary institutions or corporations offering educational programs in Alabama with main campuses or headquarters located outside the state. These institutions/corporations operate as foreign corporations in Alabama and include public and private, profit and non-profit colleges and universities. The Commission's regulatory authority for programmatic review is coordinated with the Division of Licensure of the Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education.

Program Review Activities: Thirty (30) non-resident, non-profit and proprietary institutions/corporations were licensed by the Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education to operate during calendar year 2003. Seven (7) of the licensed institutions have no physical sites in the state but solicit students for out-of-state programs through agents. The remainder offered programs at 46 locations throughout Alabama.

Of the twenty-three (23) institutions/corporations operating at physical sites, eight (8) were reviewed in accord with the ACHE regulations and criteria for the review of non-resident institutions. These were approved to offer programs at twenty (20) locations that enroll more than 3,000 students. The remaining 14 institutions operating at 26 sites throughout the state were exempt from Commission review for reasons of Alabama incorporation, program duration or purpose of offering, i.e., those offered by businesses for their employees.

The Commission's review criteria and procedures are designed to measure the quality of the offerings at each site through an evaluation of curriculum, attendance policies, admission requirements, faculty qualifications, administrative procedures, placement rate of graduates and the marketing of programs. Reviews are conducted annually and include a site visit. All programs approved by the Commission for continuation were accredited by regional or national accrediting agencies recognized by the U. S. Department of Education and Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

For an inventory of approved programs as well as information on the operational procedures of this program, see the link to Non-Resident Institutional Review on the Commission's web site at www.ache.state.al.us

STUDENT DATABASE

Legislative Requirements

Act 96-509 requires the Alabama Commission on Higher Education "...to obtain specific information from each two-year and four-year public institution of higher education to establish a student unit record data system." It requires generation of at least four reports: High School report, Out-of-State Student's report, Student Transfer report and Retention and Graduation report.

PARTICIPANTS

The Higher Education Information Advisory Group (HEIAG) Steering Committee has been recognized as the advisory committee referenced in Act 96-509. It includes representatives from two-year and four-year public institutions. Other participants working on this project have included staff from the Commission, the Department of PostSecondary Education and the State Department of Education.

ACTIVITIES

Activities during the past year:

1. All two-year and four-year public institutions submitted production data on their students for Summer 2002, Fall 2002, and Spring 2003 terms. The Statewide Student Database contains a combined total of over two million student records submitted during the past four years.
2. An average of 99.9% of all student records received from the institutions were acceptable and have been included in the Statewide Student Database.
3. All information regarding this project is posted on ACHE's web site at www.ache.state.al.us.
4. High School Reports were generated and sent to State School Superintendent of Education Ed Richardson using 2001-2002 high school student information.
5. The Tuition and Residency Report was released using Fall 2001-2002 data providing information on Out-of-State Students.
6. The Transfer/Migration report was generated and released to the institutions.
7. A Cohort Cross-Match process allows institutions an efficient way to monitor their cohort students electronically.
8. A clean-up process allows institutions to clean-up data that was reported incorrectly.

9. The Tuition Eligibility and Student Source Survey Reports were generated using data from the Statewide Student Database this year in lieu of requiring the institutions to submit separate reports
10. Ad-Hoc Reports were generated using data from the Statewide Student Database.
11. Staff is currently processing the third year of unit-record completions data submitted for the Student Database.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

1. The first Retention/Graduation report is anticipated to be generated during 2004 after six years of data has been gathered and analyzed.

NAAL ANNUAL REPORT: CELEBRATING INNOVATION IN SHARING ACADEMIC LIBRARY RESOURCES

The year 2004 marks the twentieth anniversary of a remarkable innovation in higher education for Alabama. In 1984, the Alabama Legislature appropriated funding for the Network of Alabama Academic Libraries (NAAL) as the result of a statewide assessment that found Alabama's academic libraries grossly inadequate in both the quality and quantity of information available for graduate instruction and research. This marked a new era in cooperation to provide adequate information for instruction and research by students, faculty, and other researchers regardless of their collegial affiliation.

From the beginning of NAAL, its institutional representatives have focused on strengthening their collective library resources and services for the benefit of all students and faculty. By adopting a common vision, every member institution has achieved significant gains in both the quality and quantity of information available to its constituents. The programs of NAAL have effectively transcended institutional boundaries to forge an information infrastructure that assures EVERY student, faculty member, and other researcher with access to the information resources needed for study and research.

Since its creation, NAAL has worked to eliminate political, financial, physical, and technological barriers that prevent students and other users from obtaining needed information. In 1984, Alabama's education and library future was filled with a high degree of uncertainty, especially as digital and other technologies began to change the fundamental functions of libraries. Collaboration through NAAL has strengthened institutional capability to plan and manage an increasingly complex education and information environment. Changes in information delivery have been carefully managed by NAAL members to encourage and extend access to global information. Because of this careful planning, the introduction of new technologies such as the Internet, World Wide Web, online indexing and abstracting databases, electronic text, and digital images has not occurred at the expense of traditional library services which are still very much needed and used by today's students and faculty.

The first program of the nascent network was an online union catalog identifying all circulating books and journals held by its members. With this database in place, librarians could determine what materials were held by any Alabama academic library, assess statewide holdings for adequacy, and plan acquisitions to correct collection weaknesses. Most importantly, this database became the basis for sharing materials, thus achieving the reality that any student could use the total library resources of the NAAL libraries. Technology for the electronic transmission of documents also enabled NAAL to deliver requested materials very quickly to requesting students.

In a very few years after its creation, NAAL could proudly report that Alabama was the first state to:

- attain a statewide online catalog of its university libraries' holdings—searchable from any academic library to determine what materials are owned in-state
- support lending library materials among all academic libraries without charge to the borrowing students or faculty
- achieve remarkable delivery times for requested items with most materials delivered within four days of the request. Photocopied items, transmitted electronically, arrive within 24 hours of the request. Physical delivery of books via NAAL's commercial package delivery service averages four days with the majority delivered overnight.
- initiate systematic, cooperative academic library collection development to achieve a collaborative research-level collection accessible to any Alabama student or researcher

When electronic information products became viable information resources, NAAL evaluated the use of its funds to acquire print materials for the Cooperative Collection Development Program. Members determined that using NAAL's limited funds to develop shared licenses for access to electronic databases could result in significant savings for the libraries and expand the universe of information available to library users. NAAL may have been the first consortium to complete a statewide license for all of its members to access a shared online database containing the full text of journal articles. From this first license, the NAAL program now supports over fifty databases. Members receive substantial discounts over the cost of an individual subscription with the program saving over \$2,000,000 each year in database costs for member institutions.

NAAL's cooperation in licensing databases has significantly improved access to information needed for study and research. Equally important, it has resulted in more economic use of the state's limited financial resources. Building on this success, NAAL fostered the concept of a "statewide virtual library" to assure every student, K-12 through college, and the citizens of Alabama, with access to core resources needed for education and lifelong learning. In the 1990s, NAAL forged a coalition representing all education sectors; and this collaboration successfully obtained state funding in 1999 for the Alabama Virtual Library. The AVL mirrors a successful agenda to:

- achieve equity by expanding access to library and information resources for all students regardless of the user's geographical location or economic status;
- achieve economy through cost savings realized by shared acquisitions of online information products;
- achieve excellence by enriching the quality and quantity of information available to meet learning needs, and
- reduce unnecessary duplication of resources.

The success of the Alabama Virtual Library has resulted in its national recognition as a model program for other states to emulate.

In 2001, NAAL began a new statewide initiative to provide access to the special treasures collected by academic libraries and other repositories. These unique printed and manuscript materials documenting the history of Alabama and other important and timely research topics are in great demand. Their value and physical condition often require restrictions on their use. New technology enables librarians to catalog and digitize letters, manuscripts, photographs, recordings, and even films and videos for access online. With the assistance of a federal grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, NAAL has begun to identify, describe, organize, and digitize materials that offer unique contributions to scholarship. In its earliest phase, this program will create digital surrogates of unique materials supporting the study of Alabama history and make these electronic surrogates accessible via the Internet. The digital technologies used for this program will greatly broaden access to knowledge and stimulate creative uses for these unique materials.

In its twenty years, NAAL has evolved from a program with a single constituent –academic institutions supporting graduate-level studies. After 20 years of cooperation, NAAL supports a greatly expanded mission of improving library resources for ALL Alabamians. NAAL’s on-going support for the Alabama Virtual Library and the emerging digital library collections provides leadership for all types of cultural heritage repositories including public, school, and community college libraries, as well as museums and archives. As a result of NAAL’s vision over the past 20 years, all Alabamians have access to significant information resources at a level unimaginable in 1984.

ALABAMA VIRTUAL LIBRARY

The high point of the staff's involvement in the Alabama Virtual Library (AVL) was the August 13, 2003 demonstration of the AVL at Forest Avenue Magnet School. The demonstration was arranged by the staff and it included Governor Bob Riley, West Virginia Gov. Bob Wise, and a delegation from the Southern Governors' Association.

Upon the recommendation of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), the AVL was chosen by Governor Wise, the SGA President, because it appears to be "The region's premier cost-saving virtual library". His visit was followed by a presentation of the AVL to attendees at the SGA annual meeting, September 21-23 in Charleston, West Virginia where participants discussed "*Higher Education Access: the Bridge to Economic Prosperity.*"

The AVL represents part of the Commission's response for higher education and K-12 sectors to work together for the benefit of Alabama's students. The program for academic institutions, the Network of Alabama Academic Libraries (NAAL), has been a leader in shared use of electronic resources for university students --and the Commission saw the need to build a similar coalition to extend the concept of sharing databases with K-12 school systems, two-year colleges, and public libraries.

The Business Coalition of Alabama, along with the Chambers of Commerce Association and the Economic Development Partnership, were major advocates for funding in the 1999 Legislative Session.

Major features of the AVL are:

Equity - Equity is the cornerstone of the AVL. Resources are available free of charge to all citizens in Alabama at any time on demand and contain no advertisements. Over 400,000 remote/home access cards have been issued. In 2003, projected searches performed on the AVL by individual users will approach 6,000,000. Residents can sign up for AVL at their local library.

Excellence - The AVL provides up-to-date, accurate information. The Council has selected a well-rounded core collection including atlases, dictionaries, literary criticism, nearly 9,000 full text periodicals for the general public as well as journals for researchers.

Economy - The core library is delivered at an approximate cost of \$.60 per capita. As a result, the cost per student is less for the state as a single entity than it is for small individual institutions. If each of the public libraries, public schools, postsecondary institutions and universities individually purchased just the single, largest database in the collection, it would cost \$18,500,000. A small high school library would have to pay more than \$10,000 to purchase a single database that is included in the AVL.

For the state of Alabama, the AVL represents a new approach to delivering essential government services. The funding crosses organizational lines and is intended to benefit students and citizens. Therefore, the AVL is governed by a representative council to assure that all citizens have access to information resources needed for instruction, research, as well as life-long learning.

Report on SREB Activities

THE SOUTHERN REGIONAL EDUCATION BOARD

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) serves as a coordinating agency for activities that make the program part of national activities related to the production of minority faculty members. These nationwide activities include coordinating common regional program policies and practices, conducting an annual meeting of regional advisory committee representatives, and contributing to the production of annual reports containing information about the program's progress and developments nationwide.

SREB also provides support services to students and coordinates an annual institute for scholars that emphasizes teaching skills and builds a sense of commitment, teamwork and belonging.

In recruiting students for the program the Commission staff and the institutions look for potential scholars in the following academic fields: Mathematics, Science and Technology, Social and Behavioral Science, Health Professions, Business and Management, and the Humanities.

Now in its 10th year of operation, the SREB Doctoral Scholars Program supports more than 200 scholars, who attend 78 institutions in 23 states. SREB states share resources, work to expand their minority applicant pool, support qualified candidates with financial assistance for up to five years of graduate study, and assist graduates and higher education institutions in identifying employment opportunities. The program has maintained a retention rate of more than 90 percent, and more than 70 percent of its graduates have begun academic careers.

ACADEMIC COMMON MARKET

The Academic Common Market (ACM) allows a student to enroll in an undergraduate or graduate program in another state without having to pay out-of-state tuition if that university offers a program of study not offered by the public institutions in the student's home state.

- States that send students save money because they do not have to establish and maintain costly programs.
- States and colleges that receive students can operate programs more efficiently because they gain quality students and tuition for spaces that otherwise would have been vacant.
- Students benefit by not having to pay out-of-state tuition, which would have prevented many of them from earning degrees in the fields they had chosen.

The Commission staff has been responsible for the ACM since 1974. Furthermore, the Alabama program has been a highly successful one and it was one of three state programs profiled during the March 2003 annual spring meeting of the state coordinators. SREB invited the Alabama Coordinator to describe the Alabama ACM process because several states appointed new coordinators who had not participated in the ACM prior to their appointments.

The key points of the Alabama presentations are as follows:

During fall 2002, the Commission staff reviewed its operational procedures and invited Alabama's institutional coordinators to attend a meeting and comment on proposed guidelines that were prepared for submission to the Commissioners for official approval. The SREB coordinator was present at the meeting to:

- Show how the Academic Common Market works with the 16 SREB states and,
- Provide data on states accessing the programs offered by the Alabama institutions.

This collaboration of the Alabama state coordinator, Alabama university coordinators and the SREB coordinator resulted in the ACM guidelines being approved and adopted, for the first time, by the Commission in December, 2002. The ACM guidelines are included in the Commission's Administrative Procedures Act and also listed on the Commission's website. The listing of the program on the Commission's website has been an effective tool for students, parents and Alabama legislators.

Counseling Students for Special Programs

During 2002-2003, the staff counseled more than 1000 students who expressed an interest in a variety of unique programs that are not offered in Alabama. These programs include (but are not limited to):

DEGREE	PROGRAM	UNIVERSITY
BS	Tech/Design Graphics/Animation/	East Tennessee State University
MS	Cytotechnology	Medical University of South Carolina
BS	Forensic Chemistry	University of Mississippi
BS	Nuclear & Radiological Engineering	Georgia Institute of Technology
BPS	Open Fire Learning/DL	University of Memphis
LLM	Health Care Law NEW	University of Houston Law Center
BS	Genetics	University of Georgia
BS	Broadcast Meteorology	Mississippi State University
MA	History/Public History	Middle Tennessee State
BLA	Landscape Architecture	University of Kentucky
BS	Animal Science/Horse Science	Middle Tennessee State
BS	Landscape Architecture	Louisiana State University
DNSC	Nursing via Distance Learning	University of Tennessee/Memphis
MS	Distributed Learning	University of North Texas
BS	American Sign Lang/Interpreting	Valdosta State University
MA	Arts Administration	Florida State University
MA	Geography/Community Planning	The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
BA	Drama & Communications	University of New Orleans
BLA	Landscape Architecture	Mississippi State University

The following states participate in the ACM:

Alabama	Louisiana	South Carolina
Arkansas	Maryland	Texas
Delaware	Mississippi	Virginia
Florida	North Carolina	West Virginia
Georgia	Oklahoma	
Kentucky	Tennessee	

ACHE/SREB MINORITY DOCTORAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM

In 1993, Alabama and five other states in the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) established the SREB Minority Doctoral Scholars program. The purpose of the program is to provide minorities with an opportunity to earn doctoral degrees and become faculty members at institutions where they are underrepresented.

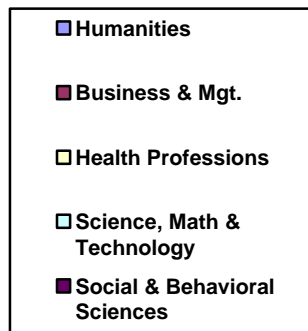
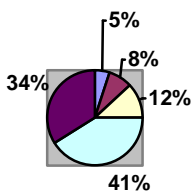
Now in its tenth year, 16 states are supporting the SREB program and Alabama leads in the number of graduates (29), matriculating Scholars (34) and employed Scholars (35).

Alabama provides funding for each continuing Scholar at \$1000 per month for three years, and new Scholars at \$1500 per month for three years. In addition, Auburn University, The University of Alabama, and the University of Alabama at Birmingham provide tuition waivers, and, if necessary, additional support beyond the three-year ACHE commitment.

Program recruiters look for potential scholars in the following academic fields: Mathematics, Science and Technology, Social and Behavioral Science, Health Professions, Business and Management, and the Humanities. The following are not priority areas: education, medicine, dentistry, law, public administration, and, theology/divinity.

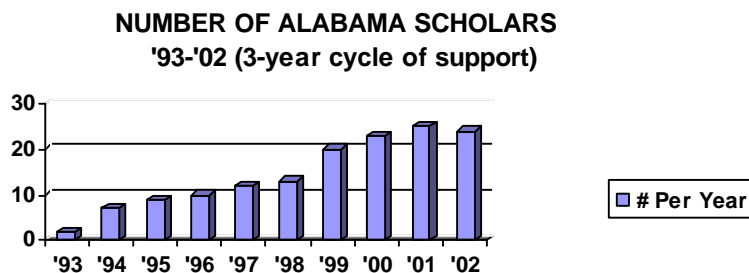
As the chart indicates, the percentages of ACHE Scholars in the academic fields are: Mathematics, Science and Technology (41 per cent), and Social and Behavioral Sciences (32 percent). Other fields are: Health Professions (12 percent), Business and Management (eight percent), Humanities (five percent), and Education (one percent).

ACADEMIC FIELDS OF ALABAMA SCHOLARS



A goal of the Compact for Faculty Diversity is to encourage states and universities to support qualified candidates with financial assistance for up to five years of graduate study.

Fortunately, Alabama's funding increased from \$34,000 for two Scholars in 1993 to \$408,000 for 24 Scholars in 2002. Please see chart.



Every scholar receives hands-on assistance from the host academic department, as well as intensive tutoring and encouragement from the program's staff. Scholars also participate in professional development opportunities, including an annual Teaching and Mentoring Institute. Faculty mentors are invited to participate in the annual Institute.

In addition to Alabama, the other states that participate in the SREB Doctoral Scholars program are Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

The success of the Alabama program is based upon a collaborative effort that includes the state of Alabama, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE), the participating universities, and SREB.

The State of Alabama

The state of Alabama funds the annual stipends for the Scholars for a period of up to three years. For the current fiscal year, Alabama is providing a total of \$408,000 for 24 full-time equivalent scholars.

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE)

The Commission and its staff utilize the state funds in the recruitment, selection, and funding of Alabama scholars. In addition, the staff coordinates all other activities associated with the program.

Consistent with the Court's mandate, the staff has provided the "Defendants with the names, areas of study, enrolled institution, and anticipated graduation date of every student enrolled in the SREB Doctoral Scholars program in Alabama."

The Alabama Universities

Participating universities provide tuition remission for the scholars. In addition, if a scholar makes satisfactory progress and has not completed the doctoral degree at the end of the state of Alabama's three-year funding period, the university provides the same level of stipend support (as Alabama does) for at least two additional years, or until the student completes the degree.

The departments of the universities also play a critical role in the program. They designate a faculty member who is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the academic progress of the doctoral scholar. The departments provide each scholar with graduate teaching/research opportunities. Any appointment as a graduate (research or teaching) assistant is made at the rate of compensation consistent with institutional practices.

Based on the data presented in the following table, three Alabama universities have been the major supporters of the program:

UNIVERSITY	STUDENTS SERVED	GRADUATES	MATRICULATING STUDENTS
University of Alabama	34	13	18
Auburn University	22	9	11
University of Alabama at Birmingham	13	7	6

Highlights of Financial Aid Activities

Alabama continues to rank in the bottom tier of states providing assistance to students pursuing higher education. Because of Alabama's limited student aid funding, reductions in Alabama family incomes, and increases in tuition and fees in our state's colleges and universities, Alabama families face even more difficult challenges in the area of college "affordability."

Because the Alabama Legislature during its Special Session in September, 2003 significantly reduced funding for the state's only need-based student aid program that receives federal matching funds, Alabama must return its \$446,119 share of federal funds for 2003-2004, as the state no longer meets the required maintenance of effort necessary to qualify for the federal monies. *As a result, Alabama will not receive any federal need-based aid funds for 2003-2004 or 2004-2005.*

Funding: State spending on need-based student aid continues to decline. According to data compiled by the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP), only 1.11% of Alabama's full-time undergraduates received grant awards (state-sponsored grant aid) in 2001-2002, the latest year for which comparative data are available. The national median was 14.67%. The low funding for need-based aid, placed Alabama at 46 of 48 states plus the District of Columbia, in its support for need-based aid to resident students. *For the next two years, Alabama will join Alaska and South Dakota as the only states that do not provide any need-based assistance to its residents.*

According to the NASSGAP Report, the estimated grant dollars per full-time undergraduate enrollment in Alabama was \$6.41. The national median was around \$290.

Family Income: Although Alabama's family income rose in 2002 from the previous year, Alabama's per capita income (\$25,128) continues to be 20% below the national average (\$30,941). *Alabama's poverty rate (14.6%) is more than 3 percentage points higher than the national poverty rate (11.5%).*

Tuition Levels: Average tuition and fees at Alabama's public 4-year institutions (\$3,245) is only 13.4% below the national average (\$3,746); *tuition and fees at Alabama's public 2-year institutions (\$1,990) is 44% higher than the national average (\$1,350).*

Alabama currently ranks 23rd of the 50 states in population. Enrollment in higher education currently puts Alabama at 20th in the nation – indicating that the lack of scholarship and grant assistance has not denied Alabama residents access to higher education. The availability of federal student loans, primarily in public four-year (versus two-year) institutions likely has contributed to students' choice and persistence in these institutions. *Unfortunately, the additional reliance on loans to pay college costs indicates that students are willing to mortgage their futures to meet their educational goals.*

Review of Grant and Scholarship Programs

ALABAMA NATIONAL GUARD EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

This program is designed to help professional members of the Alabama National Guard pursue undergraduate degrees and, to a limited extent, graduate degrees. This assistance is especially important as a component of the Military Department's recruitments efforts to maintain troop strength in Alabama.

During 2002-2003, 739 awards were given at an average of \$616 per award for a total distribution of \$455,125.

Current law restricts award payments to no more than \$500 per term and \$1,000 per year. Because average tuition and fees now exceed these limits, the Commission supports legislation that would raise or eliminate these restrictions.

ALABAMA STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Alabama Student Assistance Program is a state-supported and federally-funded grant program which is designed to assist financially-needy students. It is the state's only need-based student aid program for Alabama residents attending postsecondary educational institutions in Alabama.

During 2002-2003, 3748 awards were given at an average of \$479 and a total distribution of \$1,795,400.

ALABAMA STUDENT GRANT PROGRAM

Alabama residents enrolled in independent, nonprofit Alabama colleges and universities receive financial assistance through the Alabama Student Grant Program. This program helps bridge the differential between public and private institutions, and helps provide Alabama students an opportunity to take programs and courses at private institutions. Individual grant payments to students are significantly less than the state appropriation per student were these residents to attend public institutions in Alabama.

The state of Alabama is not unique in providing assistance for students attending private institutions. Approximately one-third of all states offer direct tuition equalization grants (student grants that offset the cost differences between public and private colleges) to students attending private institutions.

During 2002-2003, 10,743 awards were given at an average of \$463 each. Award distribution totaled \$4,969,250.

POLICE OFFICER'S AND FIREFIGHTER'S SURVIVOR'S EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program provides funds for tuition, fees, books and supply expenses for undergraduate study at Alabama public colleges and universities for dependents and spouses of police officers and firefighters killed or permanently and totally disabled in the line of duty.

During 2002-2003, 18 awards were given at an average of \$5,127 per award, for a total distribution of \$92,288.72.

STATE OF ALABAMA CHIROPRACTIC SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

This program provides scholarship assistance to financially-needy Alabama residents who are enrolled in accredited chiropractic colleges. It is the only type of assistance for Alabama students pursuing chiropractic studies.

During 2002-2003, 17 awards were given at an average of \$1,515, for a total distribution of \$25,768.

TECHNOLOGY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FOR ALABAMA TEACHERS

The Technology Scholarship Program for Alabama Teachers (TSPAT) is the first program of its type in the country. The program, created by the Alabama Legislature in 1993, enables certified, public school teachers to take advanced technology training on state-paid scholarships. Teachers take three courses specifically designed to help teachers integrate technology into the school curriculum.

To date, over 17% of all public school teachers in Alabama have received technology training with TSPAT assistance. During 2002-2003, 588 awards were given to Alabama's K-12 public school teachers at an average award of \$768. Awards totaled \$451,569.

ALABAMA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

2004 MEETING SCHEDULE

Thursday and Friday, March 11-12, 2004

Thursday and Friday, June 24-25, 2004

Thursday and Friday, September 23-24, 2004

Thursday and Friday, December 9-10, 2004